

IS YOUR ANGER A PROBLEM? (For You Or Others)

What we do with our anger is a pathway into the experience of being human. Everyone, male and female, gets angry from time to time. This can involve feeling annoyed, frustrated, irritated, aggravated, and sometimes even rageful. These emotional states are all on the continuum of anger. Some people are volatile and explosive; some people withdraw and ignore others around them; some people become sarcastic and “underhanded” in the way they express their anger; some people deny, suppress, and “stuff” their anger and become passive in their interactions with others; and some people actually address their anger in useful and productive ways. In fact, many of us use several of these methods in various situations and at various times in our lives. In the end, If you are unable to effectively recognize and address anger that you feel, you can create all sorts of other problems in your life and in your relationships with the people around you. The purpose of this website, www.ANGERresources.com, is to help you understand and change how you handle the anger that is present in your life. It can be helpful with any and all of these ways of coping with your anger.

Your anger and how you think about, experience, and express it (all the way from exploding in an aggressive manner to “stuffing” it and becoming passive), can provide you with valuable information about who you are, including how you view yourself, other people, and the world around you. It can literally become a doorway to self-knowledge, personal growth, and even healing from traumatic and painful wounds that have been a part of your past. Getting to know your anger and how it affects you and others can dramatically change and, sometimes even literally save, your life. Anger that is not expressed effectively can actually contribute to significant and life-threatening physical symptoms.

In the end, being in relationship with others is what brings zest, satisfaction, and meaning to life. Dealing with your anger in ineffective and unproductive ways separates you from others and destroys your ability to truly connect with them. If you are reading this workbook, either you or someone you know thinks that how you deal with your anger could be an issue that you need to address. Below are some of the signs that anger may have become a problem in your life. Take a look at the list below and see if what is discussed triggers any concerns for you about your own anger and how it is affecting you and those around you.

ANGER BECOMES A PROBLEM (for you or others):

When it occurs too frequently

There are plenty of justifiable reasons to get angry. Everybody experiences anger at times. But there are also lots of other times when anger is not useful or even necessary. If you find yourself feeling frustrated, tense, annoyed, irritated and angry much of the time, whether or not you are expressing it directly, you need to slow down and take a look at why this is happening.

When it lasts too long

When anger is prolonged (generally by what, how, how often, or how long you’re thinking

about it), your physical stress arousal is more difficult to handle and it becomes more difficult to bring yourself back to “normal” levels and function effectively in your life. This means that you are continually “on edge” and agitated and, as a result, you end up setting yourself up for even more aggravation by many of the minor annoyances and inconveniences in your daily life.

When the intensity is too great

Small or moderate amounts of anger can be helpful at times to energize you or motivate you to act in a productive or useful way. But high degrees of anger cloud your thinking, decrease your motivation and the potential for effective problem-solving and conflict resolution, and create unnecessary and ultimately damaging “wear and tear” on your physical well-being.

When it disrupts your relationships with other people

Disrespectful and explosive anger is often misused as a way to resolve conflicts. Some people believe that, *“If I just yell loud enough, I will be able to make my point, change others’ minds, and get my way in this situation.”* In reality, this type of behavior often creates hurt, resentment, fear, and intimidation in partners, children, co-workers, and others. As a result, you may actually end up driving away the very people you say you want to have in your life. Not addressing your anger effectively can also hurt your relationships with others. When you are not willing to talk openly and directly about hurts and frustrations and instead allow resentment to build, it will affect your thoughts and feelings about those other people. Handling anger effectively is critical if you are going to truly emotionally connect and be intimate with others.

When it interferes with getting things done or creates problems for you on the job

Intense or simmering anger, expressed or unexpressed, makes it more difficult to concentrate and harder to focus on and accomplish projects you want or need to do at work or at home. Disrespectful and punishing anger will also cause co-workers, and sometimes even supervisors, to shy away from you or react aggressively back to you. Having ineffective ways of coping with anger on the job can keep you from interacting with the people you need to have contact with in order to get your work done. Poor anger management skills limit your creativity, interfere with your motivation, and may even lead to quitting jobs abruptly or being suspended, laid off, or terminated at work.

When it restricts your ability to have fun and to relax

Intense anger takes you out of the moment and often directs your focus to hurts or resentments from the past or difficulties you may imagine yourself encountering in the future. As a result, you can end up losing spontaneity, playfulness, joy, and the ability to “slow down and smell the roses” in your daily living.

When it begins to create physical symptoms in you

Intense anger, expressed or unexpressed, can take an enormous toll on your body and your physical well-being. Research shows that you can actually end up damaging yourself physically and

developing headaches, stomach upset, back pain, chest pain, and even major cardiovascular problems like heart attacks and strokes. As author Redford Williams has unequivocally stated in his book *Anger Kills: Seventeen Strategies for Controlling the Hostility that Can Harm Your Health*, “Anger can actually kill you.”

When it leads to emotional issues like guilt, remorse, shame, depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem

Intense anger often leads to saying and doing things that you will end up regretting at a later time. It may also lead to some very real potentially devastating consequences (e.g. creating emotional distance in your relationship with your partner or having less time to spend with your children as a result of a separation or divorce). These inevitably affect, in a negative way, your emotional well-being and how you feel about yourself and those you had hoped to be close to.

When it leads to throwing, hitting, or breaking things

Intense anger can lead to making choices to destroy objects and property that are important to you and others. This not only costs money but these behaviors are also very threatening to those around you. You end up creating fear in the people you say you care about whether they actually see you doing these things or they only experience the aftermath of the holes in the wall, the broken household items, or other tell-tale signs that explosive anger has been occurring.

When it leads to emotional, verbal, physical, and sexual abuse directed at others

Intense anger and the hostile and negative thinking that accompanies it can also set the stage for acting out the anger in an aggressive or even violent way directly toward other people. These sorts of actions are never helpful in addressing important issues and in resolving problems and conflicts that are occurring in your relationships and in your life. In fact, they always create fear, resentment, mistrust, a lack of safety, and emotional distance in the people around you.

When it leads to legal consequences

Your explosive and abusive anger has the potential to get you involved with the court system through disorderly conduct and assault charges or restraining orders. If you threaten to harm others or actually use any kind of physical force with another adult, you are breaking the law and the result can be involvement with the police, arrest, having to appear in court, paying attorneys’ fees and court fines, being put on probation, and perhaps even ending up in jail.

When it leads to acting out your emotional pain in other hurtful and self-destructive ways

Anger that is not dealt with effectively can be part of abusing alcohol and drugs, sexual acting-out behaviors including having emotional or sexual affairs, and becoming irresponsible and compulsive in a variety of activities (e.g. gambling; spending and shopping; use of pornography; masturbation; television-watching, and use of your cell phone, video games, and the internet) which can lead to other significant consequences (e.g. dishonesty that separates you from those close to you). It can also involve

withdrawing from significant relationships (either passively or actively) which can lead to emotional distance and estrangement from those who are supposed to be important to you.

Think about your own anger and how it has been a part of your life. Do you see yourself anywhere in the list above? If you do, this website can be helpful for you. In this website, you can learn what anger is and isn't, how and where you developed your attitudes about anger, how to be more aware of your anger triggers and your escalation process, and what you can do to slow down and begin to address anger in a more respectful and productive way. If anger has been a problem for you in any of its forms, take the risk to try something new and different in understanding this important part of what it is to be human.

SOME QUESTIONS RELATED TO THIS ARTICLE TO THINK ABOUT FOR YOURSELF:

- 1) Do you have any concerns about how you experience or express your anger? If so, what are they and why do you have them?
- 2) Has anyone ever told you that they were concerned about how you expressed your anger? If so, who was concerned and what did they say to you?
- 3) Has anyone ever told you that they were intimidated by your anger or have other people seemed fearful or intimidated when you expressed anger around them? If so, who were these people and how did it affect your ongoing relationships with them?
- 4) Have you ever experienced any consequences related to how you expressed anger in your work life (e.g. being put on probation on the job, being fired or suspended because of your anger at work, quitting and leaving a job abruptly because you became so angry about something going on there)?
- 5) Have you ever experienced legal consequences as a result of how you behaved when you were angry (e.g. being charged with disorderly conduct or assault, having an Order For Protection or restraining order filed against you, spending time in jail because of your angry behavior)? If so, what happened and how was the situation resolved?